

The Builder.

No. 6022.

SATURDAY, MAY 1, 1847.



THE importance we attach to the progress of the Art-Union of London induces us to devote a considerable space to an account of the proceedings of the Annual

General Meeting, which was held in Drury Lane Theatre on Tuesday last. We believe it will be found the only complete account that has yet appeared, and will be read with interest by many of our readers. The good effects of the operations of this association on the public mind are becoming more apparent every day.

Very soon after the opening of the doors, the theatre was completely filled, with the exception of the gallery, and even this was nearly so before the termination of the proceedings. The one sunbeam which annually, on this occasion, has found its way in through a crevice in the shutters over the skylight at the back of the gallery, was not absent, and travelled round the house, as it has done for several years past, tipping with gold what it fell upon, and putting gas-light quite out of countenance.

Precisely at 12 o'clock, the Duke of Cambridge took the chair, and opened the business. His Royal Highness said—

Ladies and Gentlemen, when I last had the honour of presiding at your meeting I congratulated you on the progressive increase which had taken place in the number of subscribers to this association. Last year there were about 16,000 subscribers, and I have now very great pleasure in informing you that a further increase of 1,000 has taken place this year. When the condition of the country during the past twelve months, and the distress which has prevailed, are taken into consideration, I cannot help thinking this result most encouraging and satisfactory; and I am sure you will agree with me that it affords a proof of how much a taste for the fine arts is increasing among all classes of the people in this country. Having had the honour of presiding over and addressing you on so many similar occasions, I shall not trouble you by entering into any further details on the present occasion, but merely refer you to the report, which will be read by the Honorary Secretary. I have only one further remark to make, viz., that Mr. Bunn, who has with the greatest kindness granted us the use of his theatre to-day, expresses a hope that we shall be able to conclude our proceedings by three o'clock, by which time the house will be required for its ordinary purposes. I therefore hope that those gentlemen who are about to address you will make their speeches as short as possible. The Hon. Secretary will now read the report to the council.

Mr. Godwin, then read the following

REPORT.

When the council met the subscribers last year, the existence of the Art-Union of London was seriously threatened. Strong, however, in their opinion of the great value of the association, and determined to use every legitimate means in their power to ensure its continuance, they ventured, at the close of the report then read, to augur for it many years of increasing usefulness. This augury, it may

now be confidently believed, will not prove false.

Immediately after the general meeting, a deputation from the council, headed by our illustrious president, attended Sir Robert Peel, then prime minister, with the view of removing the objections to Art-Unions entertained by some part of her Majesty's Government. Not succeeding in this, every effort was made to enable members of the legislature to arrive at a just conclusion on Mr. Wyse's bill for legalizing Art-Unions, which was then before the House of Commons, and, without entering further into detail, suffice it to say, that the bill ultimately passed both houses, and received the Royal Assent on the 13th of August, 1846.

This Act first setting forth that associations for the purchase of works of art to be distributed by chance to the subscribers, or for raising sums of money by subscription to be afterwards allotted by chance amongst the contributors solely for the purchase of works of art, may be deemed to come within the provisions of the Acts of Parliament for the prevention of lotteries, — declares the same legal, so long as they are carried on in good faith for the encouragement of the Fine Arts, provided that a Royal Charter of incorporation shall have been obtained, or that the instrument constituting such association, and the rules governing it, shall have been approved of by a committee of her Majesty's Privy Council and deposited with them.

Your council therefore immediately took the necessary steps to comply with this provision of the Act, and on the 1st of December last, "The Art-Union of London" was incorporated by Royal Charter,—long it is hoped, to exercise a beneficial educational influence,—to open the enjoyments of art to thousands to whom they have been hitherto denied, to spread abroad a knowledge and love of art, to offer encouragement to artists beyond that afforded by private purchases, as well by forming a more appreciating public as by the provision of funds, and so to assist materially the progress and elevation of the fine arts in the United Kingdom. The Charter will be found to state the broad and disinterested principles which should guide the proceedings of all such societies.

To our illustrious president the warm thanks of every member of the society and of every friend to the diffusion of art are eminently due, for his Royal Highness's most important assistance in obtaining this successful issue. To the most noble the Marquis of Northampton, V.P., the Right Honourable Lord Montagu, V.P., and Thomas Wyse, Esq., M.P., now a member of the council, similar thanks are also due; and having thus discharged the agreeable duty of acknowledging these important services, the council proceed to report to the subscribers, according to custom, the financial condition of the association, and the general proceedings during the past year.

This is the eleventh annual general meeting. At every preceding meeting the council have had to report a constant increase in the amount of the subscriptions, ranging from 489*l.*, the sum collected in the first year, to 16,975*l.* On the present occasion, notwithstanding a season of unexampled and lamentable scarcity in parts of the kingdom, and much financial embarrassment, the subscriptions amount to the sum of 17,871*l.*

The greatness of the amount may be attributed partly to the increased interest in the fine arts induced by the operations of the society, and partly to the increased exertions of the provincial and colonial secretaries, from whom a larger sum has been received than on any former occasion. The number of provincial secretaries is now 398. St. Lucia, Quebec, Australia, Sidney, and Jamaica, have been added to the list of places where the society has an honorary agent active in its behalf. The list before included parts of Germany, New York, Mexico, Montreal, New Brunswick, Ceylon, Singapore, Bombay, Dominica, Monte Video, and China.

258 works of art were selected by the prizeholders of last year, and were exhibited, as usual, for four weeks, including a certain

number of evenings. This exhibition was visited by upwards of 200,000 persons.

The council are induced again to remark that the annual exhibition of works of fine art, thus opened gratuitously to the public, may be regarded as one of the most important results of the association. They would gladly see greater facilities for the enjoyment of works of art elsewhere afforded to the people generally than now exist.

For the premium of 500*l.* offered by the council last year for a group or single figure in marble, twenty models, as follows, sent in on the 1st of July last, were exhibited to the subscribers and their friends in the Princess's Concert Room.

1. A Girl persuading Cupid to Shoot at one she loves.
2. Iris ascending.
3. Taliesin pen Beirdd.
4. The contest between the Minstrel and Nightingale,—from *Strada*.
5. Maternal affection.
6. Sleep.—A Sister and Brother.
7. Charity.
8. Dancing girl reposing.
9. A Deer-stalker in Pursuit.
10. Innocence.
11. Hagar and Ishmael in the Desert.
12. Genius receiving the Reward of Merit.
13. Pastoral Apollo.
14. A Youth at a Scream.
15. Group of Adam and Eve lamenting the Death of Abel.
16. Narcissus.
17. The Meeting of Hero and Leander.
18. The Centaur Chiron instructing the youthful Esculapius in the Medicinal properties of Herbs.
19. A Hunter returned Home.
20. L'Allegro.

After due consideration, the premium was awarded to the statue, "The Dancing Girl Reposing," which, on opening the letter accompanying it, was found to be the work of Mr. Calder Marshall, A.R.A. Mr. Marshall is now executing the model in marble, and it will form one of the prizes for an ensuing year, —to which year's subscription of course, the amount of the premium will be charged.

In order to express their high opinion of a second statue, "Innocence," the council awarded to the author of it, afterwards found to be Mr. J. H. Foley, the sum of 100*l.*, on condition of receiving from him a reduced copy of the figure, and the right of reproducing it in statuary porcelain. The reduced model is now on the table, and fifty copies of it, in the beautiful material mentioned, will be allotted to-day.

A third statue, submitted in competition, "Iris Ascending," found to be by Mr. Kirk, was considered by the council well adapted for working in bronze, and they accordingly arranged with the sculptor to furnish a model of the required size. A copy in bronze has been produced by Mr. Hatfield, and the right to twenty such will form part of the present distribution. Mr. H. C. Selous prize painting from the selected cartoon, "Queen Philippa interceding for the lives of the Burgesses of Calais," is finished, and will be exhibited with the prizes of the year. The mode of appropriating it is not yet determined on.

The Chantrey medals have been distributed to those subscribers who were entitled to them. The Wren medal, allotted last year, has been delayed by the indisposition of the engraver, Mr. Wilson, but may now be expected in a short time. The council are taking steps to obtain other medals,—commemorative of Hogarth, Inigo Jones, and Banks, the sculptor.

The council have now to speak of the engravings. "Jephtha's Daughter," and the illustrations of "Gertrude of Wyoming," due to the subscribers of last year, have been distributed.

The plate of "The Convalescent from Waterloo," due for the preceding year, and kept back by circumstances beyond control, is now in the printer's hands. Impressions from it will be distributed as soon as the required number can be obtained.

The prints for the current year, "The Last Embrace" and the "Neapolitan Wedding," engraved by Mr. C. Rolfs and Mr. F. A. Heath, after Mr. Uwins, R.A., and the outlines from seven of the cartoons submitted in competition for the premium of 500*l.*, are in the same stage of forwardness.